

Old Testament Lessons

OT Stories That Teach Us About God and Faith

July 26, 2020

I. Introduction

- A. Last Sunday we looked at the power of faith in God to promote obedience to God, with the outcome being the blessings of God. Today we are going to use the story of Samson to look at the power of **false beliefs**, the power of **felt-needs**, and the power of **revenge** to motivate us to do what we know is wrong in a way that feels like we can't help ourselves.
- B. To help you understand what I mean when speaking about false beliefs, felt-needs, and revenge, I am going to define each of the terms.
 1. A **false belief** is any belief that is not true yet we hold to be true and therefore act accordingly.
 - a. A common false belief is if someone close to you whom you trusted breaks that trust by mistreating you in some way, then you must be suspicious of and on guard against anyone who gets close to you to prevent being disappointed or hurt again.
 - b. This false belief drives methods of protection that are so self-serving they keep close relationships shallow, they promote relationship damaging responses when you feel threatened – even when the threat is non-existent, and they make those you ought to love feel less loved or even unloved.
 2. **Felt-needs** are wants, desires, or hopes that you treat as real needs, or which you allow to grow so strong that they lead you to believe you cannot live without satisfying them – just like you cannot live without food and water.
 - a. An example of a felt-need is approval and acceptance for which you are willing to appease or deceive others in order to gain or keep what you believe you need.
 - b. Another example of a felt-need comes in the form of envy or covetousness which means you must have what someone else has in order to be happy or secure or content.
 3. **Revenge** is the more extreme form of returning evil for evil, and most often it is driven by ungodly anger, pride, ill-will, spite, or malice. The one seeking revenge wants to inflict some harm on someone for the harm that someone did to him.
- C. With those definitions in mind, let's see how they effected Samson's life and consider **if** and **how** they effect our lives.

D. Prayer

II. Samson – a lesson in the power of false beliefs, felt-needs, and revenge.

A. **Judges 13:1-5** . . . Now the sons of Israel **again** did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines (*fihl IHSS teens*) forty years. [2] There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah (*muh NOH uh*); and his wife was barren and had borne no children. [3] Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. [4] Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. [5] For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines (*fih LISS teens*)."

1. **Numbers 6:1-21** describes the requirements and duties of a Nazirite.

2. **Judges 13:24-25a** . . . The woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him. [25] And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him.

B. **Judges 14:1** . . . Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman, one of the daughters of the Philistines (*fih LISS teens*). [2] So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." [3] Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "**Get her for me, for she looks good to me.**" [4] However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

1. I want to return to Samson's words, "**Get her for me, for she looks good to me.**"

a. A common false belief among men is if a woman looks good to them, she will make a great wife – and especially in bed. And though many men are this shallow, and though most of them who live by this false belief end up disappointed, this belief persists as if it were unquestionably true.

b. However, the relationship damaging part of this belief is not the disappointment many men experience after acting on what they

believe, but their selfish, shallow, and foolish ways of thinking and behaving which they bring with them into the marriage.

- c. And as you can imagine, the husband's selfishness, shallowness, and foolishness become so damaging to the relationship that his wife is even less interested in what he had hoped would be so great because she looked good to him.
 - d. And as we will see from Samson's story – an unfulfilled false belief often leads to anger, which in turn further damages the relationship.
2. Now you may think Samson and the men like him are just foolish, and you would be right. However, are there any false beliefs you foolishly cling to? If you haven't carefully examined this part of your life, it is probable you hold to at least one, if not more.
 3. The lesson here is that false beliefs most often lead to foolish, self-destructive, relationship damaging choices and behavior that not only hurt the people around you, but damage your relationship with them and with God as well.
 4. So if you want to discover any false beliefs you hold to, look at the effects of your behavior on others, your relationship with them, and your relationship with God. And if you need help identifying your false beliefs, ask for help from someone who knows how to help you.
- C. **Judges 14:10-20** . . . As a result of Samson acting on his false belief, his father made the arrangements for Samson to marry this woman.
1. During the pre-marriage festivities, Samson spoke a riddle and said he would give thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes to whomever could solve it. When the Philistine guests could not solve the riddle, they threatened Samson's bride with burning down the family home if she didn't give them the answer. She in turn pressured Samson into telling her the answer which she passed on to the Philistine guests who gave the answer to Samson.
 2. Samson got angry, and being empowered by the Spirit of God he went out and killed thirty Philistines, took the spoils and gave what he had promised to those who answered his riddle. Still angry, Samson left his bride and went home to his parents house. So Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend.
- D. **Judges 15:1a** . . . But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat, and said, "I will go in to my wife in her room."
1. Here we see the power of a felt-need to drive selfishly foolish behavior. I say selfishly foolish because Samson was only thinking

about his own felt-needs. **Remember**, Samson had been so angry with his bride that he left her and went home to his parent's house. Now, filled with desire for what he hoped would be his when he first saw her, he assumed he could walk back into her life and get the satisfaction he felt he needed.

2. Now it is true, they had wronged each other. She had wronged him by coaxing the riddle's answer out of him and telling it to the Philistines. And he had wronged her by responding with anger, killing some of her people – which put her at risk of them turning on her, and pulling away. Obviously, neither behaved in a way that endeared them to the other person.
 3. Yet Samson, driven by his felt-need for gratification set aside his hurt and anger over her past behavior and figured she should do the same for him, and in so doing, satisfy his desires.
 4. Your felt-needs may not be the same as Samson's, but they will promote selfishly foolish words and behavior just the same – which in turn will set you against God, lead you away from godliness, and damage the relationships that are or ought to be most important to you.
 5. If you want to identify felt-needs, think of the things you treat as if you must have them – regardless of the reason – and then honestly decide if they are as essential as food and water. If they aren't, yet you act as if they are, it's likely you've identified a felt-need.
- E. [1b] But her father did not let him enter. [2] Her father said, "I really thought that you hated her intensely; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead."
- F. [3] Samson then said to them, "This time I shall be blameless (*in other words, "I am acting within my rights"*) in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm." [4] Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches, and turned the foxes tail to tail and put one torch in the middle between two tails. [5] When he had set fire to the torches, he released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, thus burning up both the shocks and the standing grain, along with the vineyards and groves.
- G. [6] Then the Philistines said, "Who did this?" And they said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire (*The Philistines answered evil with evil – which is often the response to the first act of revenge*). [7] Samson said to them, "Since

you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you, but after that I will quit." [8] He struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

1. For the vengeful, revenge feels like justice – when in fact it is the prolonging of evil, which is why God said to leave vengeance in His hands.
2. However, for us humans, significant loss, horrifying injustice, and boiling anger seem to fuel revenge. The feelings of vengeance often rise quickly and subside slowly. And vengeance does serious damage – not just to those harmed by your vengeance, but also to your way of thinking, your attitudes, and your character.
3. Samson was a vengeful person. In fact, he died taking his revenge on the Philistines for taking his eyesight.
4. You might never go as far as Samson in avenging the wrongs done to you or to those you love. But you might hold on to resentment, bitterness, and even hatred – which are the food that nurtures revenge. These attitudes and mindset do serious harm to you as a person, to your way of thinking, to your way of interpreting events, to how you deal with people, and to your relationship with God.
5. Therefore, the scriptures says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (**Ephesians 4:31-32**).

H. In this next section of Samson’s story, we find him fulfilling part of his role as God’s Judge in Israel – which was to free the Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines. **Judges 15:9** . . . Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah, and spread out in Lehi. [10] The men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" And they said, "We have come up to bind Samson in order to **do to him as he did to us.**" [11] Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?" And he said to them, "**As they did to me, so I have done to them.**" (*In other words, "I only did to them what they did to me first. If they hadn't treated me so badly I wouldn't have responded as I did. Therefore, this whole mess is their fault, why are you blaming me?*) [12] They said to him, "We have come down to bind you so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines." And Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me." [13] So they said, "We will bind you fast and give you into their

hands; but we will not kill you." Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. [14] When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands. [15] He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he took it and killed a thousand men with it.

- I. **Judges 16:1** . . . Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her (*Again we see the power of felt-needs to motivate Samson to do what he knew or should have know was wrong. It is no different for us. Felt-needs can be so strong that we choose to treat them as real needs, but this is always to our harm and often to the harm of those around us.*).
- J. **Judges 16:4** . . . After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. [5] The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." [6] So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you." [7] Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I will become weak and be like any other man." [8] Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. [9] Now she had men lying in wait in an inner room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire (*tow is the stringy part of flax that is used to make thread*). So his strength was not discovered.
- K. This happened two more times. We pick up Delilah's fourth attempt in **Judges 16:18** . . . When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. [19] She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. [20] She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." **But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him** (*What a loss, and all over false-beliefs and felt-needs. The saddest part of this is that most of us don't*

take the time to consider what we will lose before losing it, but after losing it we regret being so foolish.) [21] Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.

1. Most of us are slow learners when it comes to the felt-needs and false-beliefs we hold dear.
 2. And this was true of Samson, for it was a felt-need coupled with a false-belief that got him into trouble again. He felt the need for a loving relationship and the pleasures that come with it. And he falsely believed that because Delilah responded to his advances, she must love him and therefore could be trusted with his secret.
- L. As a result, Samson lost his hair, his strength, his eyes, his freedom, his role as Israel's Judge, his dignity, and the presence of the Lord. On the last day of his life, he ended up between the supporting pillars of a building full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines. About 3,000 men and women were on the roof looking on while Samson was being taunted and subjected to their abuse of him.
1. Samson prayed, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be **avenged** of the Philistines for my two eyes." Samson grasped the two middle pillars and moved them so the building collapsed – so the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life.
 2. Do you see the power of revenge, and I wish to add, the power of resentment and bitterness? Samson was so focused on avenging his eyes, he apparently had no thought for God's honor or God's desire to free Israel from the oppression of the Philistines.
 3. But that is how selfish and foolish we become when we treat false-beliefs as true, felt-needs as real, and revenge as justified.

III. Conclusion

- A. The story of Samson can be just that, a story. Or the story of Samson can provide lessons that if we will learn them can give us reasons to examine ourselves to see if we hold false-beliefs, give in to felt-needs, or seek revenge. And this story, if so used, can change our lives for the better, or it can encourage and strengthen already established godly behavior in our lives.